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ABSTRACT

One of the main goals of the United States Information Agency (USIA) is to foster understanding between United States citizens and people from other countries. Community colleges, with their experience working with diverse clients and international institutions, can play an important role in USIA programs and activities. The goal of understanding other cultures has become increasingly important as the United States enters into the new global, knowledge-based economy. Programs run by the USIA fall into three categories: academic programs, programs that bring international visitors to the United States, and citizen and professional exchanges. The flagship of the USIA's exchange efforts is the Fulbright program, consisting of three components: a grant program supporting U.S. scholars working abroad, a teacher exchange program, and a study abroad program for U.S. students. The Agency also runs the College and University Affiliations program, awarding grants to colleges to develop or expand linkages to institutions abroad, and supports over 400 offices abroad that provide information on U.S. colleges. Finally, the Agency operates the Office of Citizen Exchanges, providing grants to support exchanges with community organizations, professional associations, and colleges. These programs can provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff at colleges to interact with visitors from other countries and can lead to long-term programs between host colleges and institutions abroad. (BCY)

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Enhancing Community College Connections with the United States Information Agency: Opportunities in International Education and Exchange

David N. Levin

United States Information Agency

Plenary address given at the Annual Community Colleges for International Development Conference (20th, Orlando, FL, Feb. 2-5, 1997)

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"Enhancing Community College Connections with the United States Information Agency: Opportunities in International Education and Exchange"

Plenary address
Community Colleges for International Development
20th Annual Conference
February 3, 1997
Orlando, FL

by
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United States Information Agency

I attended my first CCID gathering 20 years ago with Maxwell King and Bob Brueder, while I was with the International Division of the U.S. Office of Education. I've followed CCID's activities with interest since then and am delighted to be participating in this landmark 20th annual conference, this time wearing a USIA hat.

The U.S. Information Agency clearly is interested in increasing its interaction with community colleges. We want community colleges to get more involved in our activities and to take greater advantage of our different institutional and individual grant opportunities.

Recently, my colleagues at USIA briefed AACC's Commission on International Education, working closely with Audree Chase and Jim Mahoney. We have also worked with Dean VanTease, Linda Korbel and Jim Hurley, participating in ACIIE conferences and briefings in Washington. In 1995 I participated in ACIIE's annual conference in Daytona, conducting a half-day USIA workshop for conference attendees. It is therefore most appropriate that USIA is represented here at this CCID conference and I appreciate Al Kohler's invitation. I should add that since this is my second trip to Florida, both relating to community colleges, I figure that if I make this trip once more, I should be able to permanently keep this route. (I have not yet tried out this theory on my bosses at USIA.)

Thinking about connections with community colleges and a good subtitle for my remarks, I thought about, but ultimately shied away from "Hello, I'm from Washington and I'm here to help you." That may have worked five years ago, but perhaps is no longer in vogue. Another enticing subtitle, at least for those of you that have seen the movie "Jerry Maguire" with Tom Cruise, might have been

"a response to 'show me the money'". I do want to talk about funding opportunities. But before that I want to talk briefly about the rationale for stronger connections between USIA programs and community colleges.

First, the legislation underlying USIA's educational and cultural affairs programs and activities calls for "...the fostering of mutual understanding between U.S. citizens and people from other countries and cultures..." This underlying objective dates back to 1946 when the Fulbright Act (now called the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act) was passed. This concept can be accomplished more affectively when we include community colleges in such programs and activities. The multiplier impact is essential, and community colleges, by their very nature, do that extremely well.

Second, we are committed to diversity, looking at ways our programs and activities can serve people from traditionally underrepresented audiences, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, the physically challenged, and people of low and moderate income. This clearly strengthens our programs and activities. Beyond that, the simple truth is that as these programs are supported by the U.S. taxpayers, participants should better reflect the make-up of the American populus. USIA's commitment to diversity has strong parallels with the work and strength of community colleges.

Third, from a larger, overarching perspective, the need for increased international understanding today is unprecedented in this country and around the globe. The bipolar cold war world, and our place in it, in many ways, was far less complex than is the multipolar world of today. Having said that, the global political scene is only part of, and perhaps only the most obvious example of our changing times.

America, as part of a group of nations, peoples and cultures, is inexorably becoming more internationally intertwined than ever -- in business, trade and finance, through the internet, the satellite dish, the computer chip, scientifically, environmentally and educationally.

This means that in 1997 and in the next century, the United States' place in the world will depend less on our nation's ability to direct events through strength than on the capacity of individual Americans in education, business and industry, government, and society at large to understand and participate meaningfully in a global community.

Not being a futurist, it is difficult for me to imagine specifically what lies ahead. As the French poet Paul Valery remarked, "The trouble with our times is that the future is not what it used to be." In many ways, the only predictability is

unpredictability. To quote Buckminster Fuller, "There is only one outstandingly important fact regarding Spaceship Earth and that is that no instruction book came with it."

What is clear is that understanding other peoples and their cultures is ever more important for all of us, regardless of what we do. Demarcations between domestic and international issues and concerns are blurred. We are increasingly becoming part of a global knowledge-based economy. The American education system, including community colleges, increasingly will need to aid their constituents in becoming globally aware and literate, and appreciating differences between people and cultures. This simultaneously provides unique challenges and opportunities, and relates most directly and specifically to the importance of connections between USIA and community colleges I mentioned earlier.

Let me now talk about some of those connections or opportunities from the USIA perspective. Its an abridged version of a guide to USIA programs and relates to programs and activities of particular interest to community colleges. It's also a sales pitch. I am happy to see, however, that a sales pitch may not be necessary. I am most impressed with what I am hearing at this conference about your real commitment to increasing international education and exchange on your campuses. Perhaps it's more a case of helping you get the necessary tools to accomplish that objective. I have brought information packets with me that provide greater details about the different programs and activities I will mention and I ask that you take a packet with you.

I know that Max can attest to the value of the U.S. Government's involvement in this field. It's rewarding to hear that his interest and commitment in international education stems from having traveled in Europe in 1976 as part of a U. S. Office of Education-funded delegation of college presidents and that he had a Fulbright grant to India a few years later. Who says our programs don't pay off?

As an overview, for those of you not familiar with USIA, we are an independent foreign affairs agency of the U.S. government responsible for conducting this country's international public diplomacy efforts -- promoting people-to-people interaction. More specifically, USIA's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs manages a wide range of educational and cultural exchange programs.

Budget-wise, funding for the Bureau in FY 1997 is roughly $220 million. This is 90% of last year's funding level and a 1/3 less than we received in FY 1994. The good news is that the decreases are decreasing. Seriously, we are cautiously optimistic, with some indication that FY 1997 will prove to be a low water mark.

Our exchange programs and activities fall into three general categories: academic programs; programs bringing international visitors to the United States; and citizen and professional exchanges, including youth exchanges.

Our flagship exchange program, undoubtedly the USIA program most familiar to you, is the Fulbright program, launched by Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright in 1945 and signed into law by President Truman in August, 1946. From small beginnings, the program in its 50-year history, has sponsored more than 200,000 students, teachers and scholars from the United States and from 140 other countries. The Senator called it "a modest program with an immodest aim." Funding this year is approximately $98 million, equal to the FY 1996 level and down roughly $25 million from FY 1995. During the Program's 50-year history, Congress has appropriated about $2 billion for it. Harriet Fulbright, Senator Fulbright's widow, in talking about perspectives using budget numbers, likes to equate the $2 billion with what is spent by the current Defense Department in five days.

The Fulbright Program has three principal components:

The Fulbright Scholar Program provides grants for roughly 800 U.S. college and university faculty and professionals to lecture and/or conduct research abroad and for about 800 foreign faculty, generally to conduct research in the United States.

A component of the Scholar program enables U.S. higher education institutions to submit proposals to bring visiting faculty from abroad to lecture on campus for a year. This Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence Program is small, supporting roughly 40 grants annually. I mention it, however, because we are concertedly trying to reach campuses that are often underrepresented in international education, including community colleges.

The Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program enables U.S. and foreign teachers to exchange their teaching jobs for an academic year. As a person-to-person two-way exchange, it is unique among the Fulbright programs, and rare among exchanges in general. It is principally a program for high school teachers but does include university faculty through the community college level. In looking at grantee numbers for the past five years, 75 U.S. community college faculty have exchanged teaching assignments with foreign counterparts. Based on the projected number of available openings, there is room to triple the number of community college participants. (That was a sales pitch and this is a superb program.)

The Fulbright Student Program enables U.S. graduating seniors and graduate students to study abroad and foreign graduate students to study in this country. While this program may not be of direct interest to you, I mention it given the large number of your students who go on for four-year degrees.

I mentioned that the Fulbright Program is 50 years old. Throughout 1996 we worked with many colleges and universities across the country to commemorate the anniversary on campuses, including a number of community colleges -- Edmonds Community College, the College of DuPage and the Illinois Consortium for International Studies and Programs, the Los Angeles Community College District, and Northern Virginia Community College.

The College and University Affiliations Program awards institutional grants to U.S. colleges and universities to develop or expand linkages with universities abroad. Roughly 25 $120,000 grants are made annually, with grants covering a three-year period promoting faculty and curriculum development. This is another program that should be of considerable interest to you.

We operate a number of other programs providing additional exchange opportunities with Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltics, Russia and the New Independent States. They involve both U.S. and foreign participants and include high school students, undergraduate and graduate students, university faculty at all levels and professionals outside of academe. The information packets include a factsheet that provides greater details.

USIA also supports more than 400 offices abroad that provide information and guidance to foreign students interested in studying in the United States. I know that you are extremely interested in enrolling foreign students in your institutions. We are anxious to work with you to ensure that these advising offices have up-to-date information about educational opportunities on your campuses. I know that one important reference we provide the advising centers is Peterson's Guide to U.S. Community Colleges.

USIA's Office of International Visitors supports more than 5,000 visitors from abroad coming to the United States for a week to a month, individually and in groups, from a single country, from countries in a region or on a multiregional basis, to confer with American colleagues in a myriad of fields and to experience America first-hand. The visitors --- promising figures in government, politics, the media, labor, science, the arts, and of course education --- are selected by our American Embassies abroad. As we program these visitors across the country, we would certainly like to see an increase in the number of community colleges serving as hosts. While this is not a money-making proposition, the opportunity for your faculty, students and staff to interact with these visitors is most valuable for your institutions and for the visitors alike. There can be long-term benefits. Let me give you one excellent example. Two years ago the Rector of Addis Ababa Commercial College spent five days at Middlesex Community College as an International Visitor, learning about this country's community college system. He returned there six months later on his own for further consultations. A

relationship developed and this year Middlesex applied for and received one of the University Affiliations grants I mentioned, to develop a business curriculum with Addis Ababa Commercial College.

We are developing an information resource base to help us in programming international visitors and would welcome materials from you regarding programs, operations and facilities that you believe would be of interest to foreign visitors. At the local level, much of this international visitor programming is arranged by 100 councils for international visitors located throughout the country. We can provide you with a directory of these offices so you can determine if there is one in your vicinity with whom to work. The local visitors centers are affiliated with the National Council for International Visitors. My colleague, Sherry Mueller, NCIV's Executive Director is here, and she will be providing you with additional information and advice.

Our third major office is the Office of Citizen Exchanges. The Office provides grants to support international exchanges with non-profit American institutions, including voluntary community organizations, professional associations and colleges and universities. The grants forge professional links between thousands of Americans and foreign visitors who take part in exchanges at the grass roots level both in the United States and abroad. Thematic categories for these grants often include such topics as the rule of law, sustainable development, conflict resolution and the development of free market economies, Applicant organizations have often proposed their own program topics too.

As part of the Citizen Exchanges office, we also conduct a program called Business for Russia that brings mid-level Russian entrepreneurs to the United States for six-week internships with American firms.

Youth exchange is an important component of this office as well. The Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange links American and German young people and is consciously looking for more community college participants.

I appreciate your joining me on this quick tour through USIA's programs and hope that I have piqued your interest in some of our offerings. I strongly encourage you to follow-up with our various offices.

A brochure in your packets entitled *The Ties that Unite Us* is our overall Bureau brochure and includes specific office and program addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. Our website is WWW.USIA.ORG. In the event that I can personally help you as you look over this material in the relative calm of your office or are advising others, please contact me by e-mail: dlevin@usia.org or by telephone: 202/619-4360.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you. I would now be pleased to receive your comments and to answer questions you may have

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